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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Public Affairs

Radio-TV Division

Washington, D.C. 20250

(202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2607

April 23, 1993

FILLING IN THE FORMS -- During a visit to a USDA co-located field office in Lancaster, Ohio, Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy saw firsthand the process farmers go through in working with the Department. Espy visited the Fairfield County Agriculture Center which houses offices for USDA's Cooperative Extension Service, Farmers Home Administration, Soil Conservation Service, and the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. Secretary Espy met USDA employees and visited with farmers conducting business at the office. The Secretary was in Ohio to attend Senator John Glenn's (D-Ohio) Economic Conference, held in Athens. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

VEGETABLE ACREAGE -- Spring fresh vegetable acreage is expected to be down 3 percent at 252,900 acres. Head lettuce, sweet corn and tomatoes had the largest acreage decline. Processed vegetable acreage is forecast to be 5 percent less than last year, at nearly 1.4 million acres. Green peas led the decline with a drop of 26 percent. Contact: David Mueller (202) 720-6054.

CITRUS PRODUCTION -- The forecast for citrus production this season is 15 million tons, a 24 percent increase over last season primarily due to the large increase in Florida orange production. Grapefruit production is up 21 percent from last season at 2.7 million tons. The increase is largely due to a much larger grapefruit crop in Florida. The large supply will affect prices. Contact: Jim Brewster (202) 720-7688.

RURAL ENTERPRISE ZONES -- Agriculture-dependent areas are only a small part of the total rural economy, but they stand to benefit from successful rural enterprise zones. The zones apply tax incentives and other economic inducements to encourage business growth and investment in target areas. There are various proposals providing for multi-community collaboration and wider geographic areas than state programs, changes that could enhance business opportunities in rural communities. Research suggests that rural zones may be even more successful than their urban counterparts in creating jobs. Contact: Richard Reeder (202) 219-0542.

GETTING OFF WELFARE -- A new publication by USDA's Economic Research Service, "The Family Support Act - Will it Work in Rural Areas," examines how the Act can help rural families escape from the welfare rolls. The book notes, however, that the Family Support Act is not a cure for poverty or welfare. The Act's ultimate success in rural areas depends largely on how well States and local officials can implement the legislation. Areas differ in their ability to take advantage of the Act, some rural areas may lack employment for participants who complete the JOBS program, and some States may have difficulties meeting matching requirements for Federal funding. Copies are available for \$15 plus shipping, by dialing 1-800-999-6779. Contact: Sara Mazie (202) 219-0530.

DAIRY REFERENDUM -- U.S. dairy farmers will conduct a referendum in August to determine whether to continue the national dairy promotion and research program. All dairy farmers producing milk for commercial use during April 1993 will be eligible to vote. A majority of those voting can continue the program. Dairy farmers finance the promotion and research program with a 15-cent per hundredweight assessment on all milk produced and marketed in the 48 contiguous states. The program is administered by a 36-member board appointed by the secretary of agriculture, and was last approved by dairy producers in 1985. The period between April and August will be used to issue notices to dairy farmers prior to the voting. Contact: Clarence Steinberg (202) 720-6179.

U.S. COTTON IS CLEAN -- In response to interest expressed by cotton traders and the cotton processing industry, the Bremen Cotton Exchange initiated a study to determine the amount of herbicide, insecticide and fungicide residues on raw cotton imported from several nations. The cotton was examined for a total of 228 substances that might be present. Results showed that the highest residue values found in any of the samples tested were well below the permitted levels for vegetable foodstuffs in the Threshold Limiting Value regulations. Tests of U.S. cotton indicated only a barely detectable trace of residue levels. Contact: Robert Lerman (202) 720-9510.

CHILDREN AND OBESITY -- Obesity among children in the United States aged 6 to 11 has increased by 54 percent over the last 15 years, and extreme obesity has increased by 98 percent. Twenty-seven percent of children and 21 percent of adolescents in the U.S. are obese. Obesity in children leads to adult health problems. Dr. Beth Reames, Extension nutritionist with the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, says that six factors appear to contribute to obesity in children: genetics, lifestyle, emotional overeating, indulgence, neglect and medical factors. "Some nutrition experts suggest that obesity in children has increased as a result of lack of support for children and families in our society," Reames says. "Many children turn to food and television for comfort to compensate for lack of parental and family involvement." Contact: Beth Reames (504) 388-4141.

CATFISH DOWN, PRICES UP -- U.S. catfish production is expected to fall this year, while farm and processor prices will continue to increase. Most of the contraction is forecast in the second half of the year. Catfish production last declined in 1975, and since that time has increased over 2,700 percent. Inventories of food-size fish and stockers are each down 10 percent. Farm prices are forecast to continue gaining strength this year. Contact: David Harvey (202) 219-0085.

KENAF AS LIVESTOCK FEED -- Leaves from kenaf, a bamboo-like tropical plant, can rival alfalfa as a high-protein livestock feed and provide farmers with a second crop on winter wheat acres from Kansas to the South. In tests, kenaf harvested 60 to 80 days after planting in central Oklahoma yielded about three tons of dry matter per acre. The leaves contained 30 percent crude protein, compared with 20 percent for alfalfa. Scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service say that if a producer's winter wheat is planted for grazing, kenaf can go on the same ground in May; if the wheat is harvested for grain the kenaf planting can be delayed until late June. The wheat-kenaf rotation does well on non-irrigated land. Contact: William Phillips (405) 262-5291.

COLOR SLIDE of Secretary Espy in horizontal TV format is available. TV broadcasters only please. Contact: Vic Powell (202) 720-4330.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1872 -- Brenda Curtis is in California reviewing the expanding world of fresh fruits and vegetables. Growers and retailers give a description of the more exotic varieties that are increasing in popularity. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1354 -- Tightening meat safety; yes, we have lots of bananas; getting started with "birding"; the changing produce counter; food safety at home. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1864 -- USDA News Highlights; corn disaster payments; cotton outlook; cattle troughs from old tires; a new weapon against parasitic mites. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1617 -- Environmentally-friendly food testing; fieldside chemical extraction; cold country research; tracking the frost line; four new sugarcane varieties. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Monday, May 3, horticultural exports; Tuesday, May 4, weekly weather and crop update; cotton and wool update; Tuesday, May 11, U.S. crop production, world ag supply and demand. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on food assistance after hurricane Andrew, and USDA's national parasite collection; DeBoria Janifer looks at Washington, D.C.'s cherry blossoms and importing cherry trees;

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist Norton Strommen on the weather and crop outlook; USDA world board chairman James Donald on beef and pork production; USDA economist Cathy Green on the agricultural outlook; and USDA economist Dave Harvey on aquaculture.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- DeBoria Janifer reports on the nutritional value of purslane; Pat O'Leary examines the Palmer Drought Index.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

FIELDS HAVE BEEN SATURATED...since last October, and every storm just adds to the mud, says Rich Balvanz (WMT Cedar Rapids, IA). Rich says a listener called in to say that producers shouldn't get upset about the delay in getting into the fields, he just got his 1992 crop out.

FIELD PONDS...are keeping producers out of the fields, says Marla Behrends (WKAN, Kankakee, IL), and its beginning to affect attitudes because they want to get planting underway. More than 60 counties in the state have approved an Extension Referendum that places a tax on farms to raise funds supporting Extension Service county offices. Marla says the Kankakee County board voted approval by a 58 to 42 percent margin.

BROUGHT BACK A LOAD OF INTERVIEWS...says Ron Hays (Oklahoma Agrinet, Oklahoma City), from his two-week tour of Australia. Ron says there are a number of common issues among Australian and United States producers, such as food safety and animal protection, but he says Australian grain producers expressed major concerns regarding the U.S. export bonus program.

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VIDEO COMPRESSION TECHNOLOGY...will be used later this year to reach cable companies and home satellite dishes, says Patrick Gottsch (RFD-TV, Fort Worth, TX). Pat says that on October 1 this year his agricultural broadcasting service to rural America is planning to expand operations to 24-hour, seven-day a week programming.

ITS SPRING...but we're continuing to get winter storm watches, says Shelly Beyer (Linder Farm Network, Willmar, MN). She says producers need a week of warm windy weather. Corn planting is late, but Extension is advising not to rush just yet to fast growing varieties and their lower yields. Shelly says she's busy planning the North Central NAFB regional meeting, May 20-22 in Alexandria, MN. Events include tours of aquaculture and elk farms, and an opportunity to taste roast elk.

LATE PLANTING...in many areas will likely mean 16-hour days for producers. Fatigue in the dangerous occupation of production agriculture leads to accidents. Keep 'em safe, talk safety.

VIC POWELL *Vic Powell*
Chief, Radio & TV Division